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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet, intended to clarify the nature of Latin and its practical value, provides the prospective student with information on which to determine whether to undertake the study. A quiz in English utilizes Latin loanwords and demonstrates the direct effect of Latin on English vocabulary. (RL)

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No. 731

AMERICAN CLASSICAL LEAGUE

A message to students considering the study of Latin

Courtesy of the Detroit Classical Association

doesn't mean Rexall!

It's palaeographic for "recipe"

and it means "take"—

and we urge you to take Latin

. . . *If* . . .

If . . . you're curious about the world before you came into it . . .

If . . . you're ready for more than monosyllables . . .

If . . . you're intrigued by the "big" words in English and want to know how they came into being and what they really mean . . .

If . . . you have a good mind and want it challenged . . .

If . . . you want to understand the "common denominator" that underlies all of Western civilization . . .

If . . . you enjoy mythology, archaeology, etymology, philology--(and you probably do without realizing it!) . . .

If . . . you want grammar to make sense . . .

If . . . you want a background for serious literature, history, comparative linguistics . . .

If . . . you want to study a language and culture that have been studied *continuously* for over two thousand seven hundred years . . .

. . . *THEN* Latin is for you.

Come on in—aqua gratissima est!

FL001719

What is LATIN?

The answer can take many forms...

LATIN

I. is a dead language..."dead" in the sense that no one learns it as his native tongue any more... but it lives and flourishes in the languages of the lands the Romans ruled, in French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Roumanian—the ROMANce languages—and in our own language, English.

E. g., "Your father may get a *bonus* at Christmas. You know about movie *censors*. You have a *curriculum* at school, and you collect *data* for your courses. If you flunk out, you're an *ignoramus*. If you get the highest grade in school, you may be a *genius*. You get credits for *major* and *minor* subjects. Your school has a *janitor*."—Sydney J. Harris in *The Detroit Free Press*

LATIN

II. is the "common denominator" that links the whole western world through a common language heritage and pattern of education. The Latin language and culture have been a font of inspiration for art, literature, education, philosophy, and language for over two millennia. (That's more than 2 x 1000 years.)

LATIN

III. is our source for much of the fun, entertainment, and moral instruction of classical mythology. Literary and artistic masterpieces of many nations draw on these myths for inspiration and new interpretations of old themes.

LATIN

IV. is "hard"—it makes you think abstractly about language because it is different from English in its structure. But this very difference will help you realize how your own language works. Through Latin you'll come to a better understanding of verb tenses, active and passive voice, direct and indirect objects, predicate nominatives, relative clauses, and similar grammatical concepts.

A noted modern writer puts it this way, "The exactitude which Latin demands, when one is placing words in their right order and grammatical relation, develops a solicitude for them as separate elements in an organized sentence, not as casually floating masses on the hither-and-thithering stream of consciousness."

—Robert Graves in the *New York Times Magazine*, Sept. 20, 1959

LATIN

V. is precise, orderly, and accurate. It will demand that you become accurate, orderly, and precise in your memory development and study habits, both vital to your success in all school work, now and especially in college days (in fact, these are two things which make college possible for any student.)

LATIN,

VI. in all its varying forms, is the language of the great Roman Empire, which lasted from 753 B.C. until 476 A.D. (that's 1228 years, well over twice the time from Columbus' day until our own), and is the language of many of the great books of the world, ancient, mediaeval, and renaissance. We study the Latin of the period of Caesar, Cicero, Vergil, Ovid, Horace, and other great writers who have helped to shape the literary, artistic, and political patterns of our society today.

Well, if it's "hard" and a "dead" language,

Why study LATIN?

YOU CAN

I. increase your vocabulary, your most valuable tool in thinking and communicating. You can gain a sharpened awareness of the precise meanings of words in English, because Latin has furnished the roots for more than half of the words in English; you can have "inside information" on professional, scientific, and technical terms; and you can have the pleasure of recognizing old friends in new words as your vocabulary is broadened.

YOU CAN

II. become acquainted with the mainstream of our western civilization, those intellectual and cultural traditions that have helped to shape our society. You can come to understand more intimately our world of today by sharing in the common heritage of the western world.

YOU CAN

III. learn to understand and appreciate classical allusions and references in literature, music, painting, sculpture, and drama. You will know what it means to be "between Scylla and Charybdis" and what "Cassandra-like prophecies" are, without having to be told by the editor in a foot-note.

YOU CAN

IV. become conscious of basic language construction. You can gain tools of understanding which will show you how language fits together. You can extend your language sophistication beyond the bounds of your own language and gain techniques which will help in learning other languages.

YOU CAN

V. learn to study more effectively through Latin. You will be prepared for college and an academic career where discipline in language, effective vocabulary, and good study habits are necessary for success.
Concerning the study of Latin, Dr. Nathan M. Pusey, president of Harvard University, says, "It remains true that no better subject for study at the secondary level has yet been found; and granted only a competent teacher, there is probably nothing that the young person planning to go to college might better put his time on."

YOU CAN,

VI. if you continue beyond the most elementary stages, read great books in the original language of the author and meet the great minds of another significant age and time on their own terms. Such works are available, of course, in translation, but as a famous statesman has wittily said, "reading a book in translation is like kissing a girl through a handkerchief!" (—David BenGurion in a television interview)

Answers (Don't look until you've tried)

1. 34 (or 38 if you count the table's legs!)
2. "Sinister" is Latin for "left" — ("dexter" means "right," so "ambidextrous" means having both hands as agile as a really good "southpaw").
3. Alumni. (That's if they're all boys or mixed; more than one girl graduate makes two alumnae.)
4. "Septem" is Latin for "seven"; "octo" means "eight"; "novem" stands for "nine"; and "decem" equals "ten" (as in the decimal system— but September is the *ninth* month, October the *tenth*, etc. Study the history of the Roman calendar to learn the "why" of this.)
5. $800 — per capita means "per head" — individually.
6. Semiannual—twice each year (per annum, that is). Biennial means every two years.
7. Inside a book. It means "From the books of . . ."
8. Inside your shoes; . . . at least in northern climes.
9. Green . . . and folding . . .
10. Not unless you lack filial piety. It means he's "in place of a parent."

If you were a Latin student, you wouldn't have to invert this to see the answers; you'd know them automatically!

10. If you say your teacher is "in loco parentis" should he feel insulted?
9. If you're feeling impecunious, what color is the best medicine?
8. Where do you keep your pedal extremities?
7. Where would you find a label saying "Ex Libris"?
6. Which appears more often, a biennial or a semiannual publication?
5. If the per capita wealth of 100 people is $800, how much does each one have?
4. Historically, what's illogical about the names September, October, November, and December?
3. An arithmetic problem: 1 alumnus + 1 alumna = 2 alumn__?
2. In what way is every left-handed person a sinister character?
1. If a quartet joined a quintet and they all had dinner with an octet, how many legs would there be under the dining room table?

Here's a quiz to try out on your family and friends: